

## **Stress Relieving Techniques**

**In the session with Karen you will experience and learn about the following:-**

- Breath work for relaxation
- 7/11 Breathing Technique
- Visualization technique for confidence and stress relief
- Information about Flower essences and essential aromatic oils that can help stress relief for horse and rider.

### **Breath Work for Relaxation**

#### ***Settling***

- Settle into a comfortable position, either in a straight backed chair or on a soft surface on the floor with your bottom supported by cushions or on a soft surface on the floor. If you use a chair sit away from the back of the chair so that your spine is self-supporting .If you sit on the floor , it is helpful if your knees can actually touch the floor although that may not happen at the beginning; experiment with the height of the cushions until you feel comfortable and firmly supported. (You may need to place small cushions under your knees at first to support your hips).
- Allow the back to adopt an erect, dignified and comfortable position. If sitting in a chair, have the feet flat on the floor with the legs uncrossed. Gently close your eyes if that feels comfortable. If not let your gaze fall unfocused on the floor four or five feet in front of you.

#### ***Bringing awareness to the body***

- Bring your awareness to the level of physical sensations by focusing your attention on the sensations of touch, contact & pressure in your body where it makes contact with the floor and with whatever you are sitting on. Spend a minute or two exploring these sensations.

#### ***Focusing on the sensations of breathing***

- Now bring your awareness to the changing patterns of physical sensations in the belly as the breath moves in and out of the body.  
It may help to place two hands resting gently on your belly.
- Focus your awareness on the mild sensations of stretching as the abdominal wall gently expands with each in-breath and on the sensations of gentle release as the abdominal wall deflates with each out-breath. As best you can, stay in touch with the changing sensations in your abdomen for the duration of the in-breath and the full duration of the out-breath, perhaps noticing the slight pauses between an in-breath and the following and between an out-breath and the following in-breath. As an alternative if you prefer focus on the place where you find the sensations of the breath most vivid and distinct, such as the nostrils.
- There is no need to try to control your breathing in any way – simply let your body breath by itself. As best you can, also bring this attitude of allowing to the rest of your experience- there is nothing that needs to be fixed and no particular state to be achieved. As best you can, simply surrender to your experience as it is without requiring that it be any different.

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***Working with the mind when it wanders***

- Sooner or later ( usually sooner) the mind will wander away from the focus on the breath sensations in the belly getting caught up in the thoughts, planning, or daydreams, or just aimlessly drifting about. Whatever comes up, whatever the mind is pulled to or absorbed by, is perfectly okay. This wandering and getting absorbed in things is simply what the minds do, it is not a mistake or a failure. When you notice that your awareness is no longer focused on your breath, you might want to congratulate yourself for noticing. You are once more aware of your experience and at this point you might note thinking, thinking, or planning, planning or worrying, worrying. Then letting this go escorting your attention back to the breath sensations in the belly, as you bring awareness to the feeling of this in-breath or this out-breath, whichever is here you return.
- However often you notice that the mind has wandered ( and this will quite likely happen over and over and over again) each time take note of where the mind has been ,then gently escort your attention back to the breath and simply resume attending to the changing pattern of physical sensations that come with each in-breath and with each out-breath.
- As best you can bring a quality of kindness to your awareness, perhaps seeing the repeated wanderings of the mind as opportunities to cultivate greater patience and acceptance within yourself and some compassion toward your experience.
- Continue with the practice for ten minutes, or longer if you wish, perhaps reminding yourself from time to time that the intention is simply to be aware of your experience moment by moment as best you can, using the breath as an anchor to gently reconnect with the here and now each time you notice your mind has wandered off and is no longer in touch with this very breath in this moment.

**When we stop trying to force pleasant feelings,  
they are freer to emerge on their own.  
When we stop trying to resist unpleasant feelings,  
we may find that they can drift away by  
themselves.  
When we stop trying to make something happen,  
a whole world of fresh and unanticipated  
experiences may become accessible to us**

## **The 7/11 Breathing Technique**

The 7/11 technique is a way of learning how to slow your breathing down to a normal pattern that you would normally do automatically if relaxed or asleep so it can really work to calm the body and to improve sleep patterns and quality.

It is a simple but powerful technique that is easy to do. It has an immediate beneficial effect and takes the following form:

1. Inhale to a count of seven
2. Exhale to a count of eleven

The reason for making the out- breath last longer is that inhalation has been shown to trigger the sympathetic nervous system (arousal –fight, fright, sexual arousal ) and exhalation stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system (the relaxation response). By breathing out more slowly than breathing in you strengthen the relaxation response.

If you get anxious that you cannot work with the counting and achieve the desired 7/11 count for the breath, then relax as the important thing here is that the exhalation breath is slower than the inhalation and to work on the feeling that the “out breath” is slower and becomes longer than the inhalation breath will have just the same positive effect.

As with all skills this will improve with practice and for most people a noticeable improvement in feeling relaxed and calmer will occur within 2 to 4 weeks of daily practice. It is advised that you practice the breathing for at least 3 – 5 minutes for 4 times per day. You could also choose to practice for 10 minutes twice per day instead morning and evening and this would work just as well.

Good Luck and enjoy the results!!

## **Flower Essences and Aromatherapy Oils for relieving Stress**

**Flower Essences** are preparations that enhance and support emotional imbalances caused by stress. They are made with fresh flowers, water, alcohol or vegetable glycerol preparation. There are many essences available to buy but the most well recognised are the Bach flower remedies developed by Dr Edward Bach in the 1920's. The most famous of his remedies was the 5 essence preparation known as Rescue Remedy. He did in fact develop 38 individual remedies that related to different emotions many of which were linked to anxiety and fear.

You can take the remedies as a spray, orally or adding to baths, oil or cream and massaging onto acupuncture points. The Rescue Remedy can be used neat or added to cold or warm drink. The remedy can be used in emergencies or as part of a treatment programme which can be self-devised or with the help of a Qualified Flower Essence Practitioner.

(Visit Karen's website [www.healthconnectionuk.co.uk](http://www.healthconnectionuk.co.uk) )

***All Flower Essences can be used for animals too.***

**Aromatherapy** uses a technique that makes use of essential oils which are highly scented by the flowers, leaves, stems and roots from which they have come. Traditionally used as perfumes, essential oils are equally valued for their therapeutic properties and through research have been found to enhance health, relieve stress, treat skin, digestive and pain related disorders.

Essential oils are absorbed directly into the limbic system which is the emotional system of the brain through inhalation. They are also absorbed into the blood stream through the skin, nose and lungs through inhalation. They should not be used neat on the skin except Lavender and Tea Tree Oils. They can be made into a preparation using carrier oils such as Grapeseed oil, coconut, Sweet Almond and many others.

***A simple remedy for relieving anxiety and calming the body whilst feeling up lifted is***

Lavender 4 drops, Sweet Orange (calming) or Grapefruit (uplifting) 3 drops and Vertivert 2 drops in 20mls of Grapeseed Oil. This can be applied to pulse points on the wrists and under the nose. A small amount can be applied to a handkerchief and used to inhale a little of the oil when feeling anxious. You can use the oil preparation to apply to the skin before a stressful event or the night before to aid sleep.

A few drops of Rescue Remedy can also be added to this aromatherapy preparation for an extra boost to calm fear and anxiety.

